

Railway Business Association

RAILWAYS AT NATIONAL CHAMBER CONVENTION

RAILROADS as viewed from the national point of view were the subject of discussion and provision at the annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States held in Atlantic City the week of April 26.

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

DIRECTORS of the Chamber allocated to the Department of Transportation and Communication, authorized but not yet organized, were elected. They are Howard Elliott, Chairman of the Northern Pacific, and Lewis B. Stillwell of the L. B. Stillwell Engineering Corporation, New York City.

That department when organized will be one of a number authorized by recent By-law amendments, the others being Civic Development, Domestic Distribution, Natural Resources Production, Insurance, Fabricated Production, Finance and Foreign Commerce. Each of these departments has allocated to it two directors at large chosen without regard to place of residence. Departments already organized are Industrial Production, Foreign Commerce and Insurance.

DEPARTMENT POSTPONED

The Annual Report of the Board of Directors contained the following:

“Immediate organization of the new Department of Transportation and Communication has not seemed to be essential, by reason of the continuation during the year of our Committee on Railroads and our Committee on Ocean Transportation, each with a special staff entirely devoted to the problems within the jurisdiction of these committees. . . . The organization of new departments means administrative readjustments, and accordingly gradual development of the new departments is more consistent with the needs and continuous operation of the Chamber than simultaneous creation of all of the new departments. Within a short time, the Board of Directors expects to announce the organization of the remaining departments.”

The Chairman of the Railroad Committee is George A. Post, Honorary Vice-president of the Railway Business Association.

A similar postponement was forecast in the case of the Department of Civic Development, a field already occupied in very considerable part by the existing Organization Service Bureau. The two vice-presidents allocated to Civic Development are A. L. Humphrey of Pittsburgh, a Vice-president of the

Railway Business Association, and W. C. McLucas of Kansas City, Mo.

In the course of debate in the National Council on April 26, former President Harry A. Wheeler stated that it was in contemplation for the Chamber to make, in future, fuller use of the services of staff men in the constituent organizations in connection with the work of the new departments.

In addition to those already mentioned, members of the Railway Business Association elected to the Board of Directors were Ernest T. Trigg of Philadelphia, Charles S. Keith of Kansas City, Clarence H. Howard of St. Louis and Dorr E. Felt of Chicago.

The new President is Joseph H. Defrees, lawyer, former President of the Chicago Association of Commerce, and for several years chairman of the Executive Committee of the Chamber.

RESPONSIBILITY OF BUSINESS MEN

HOMER L. FERGUSON, in his annual address as President of the Chamber, said this concerning railway transportation:

Germ of Government Ownership

"The bill which has been passed carried with it the obligation and the power on the part of the government out of a central fund to lend money to the weaker roads. You know, and I know, that whoever lends money to a weak institution will, if that institution cannot repay the money, eventually own and operate that institution. Therefore, this very bill itself has within itself the germs of governmental ownership unless the railroad systems of this country as a whole are put on a basis where they can support themselves.

Upkeep Essential

"Our committee will be charged, if you so approve, with the duty of determining in what way American business may help out in this vital question. During the war we all bought bonds. During the war we stopped non-essential industry and carried on essential industries. Is it possible at this time, when railroad credit is such that even the best companies have to pay an enormous rate for the small amount of money which they can borrow, that American business, which depends vitally on the continuance of transportation systems, can do nothing at all to make that transportation secure? All of us with business know that we must mend and keep in condition the side track connecting with the main line into our works. We would not think of letting it run down and not keeping engines going. Is that side track any more important than the main line which feeds it? As to what our people will do, what our committee will do, of course no one can tell. But, that they will be found able to recommend and to help determine upon a definite program there is no doubt.

Priority of Importance

"Not only is railroad transportation of vital interest, but the increase of transportation by water and by road is almost equally important. One difficulty with business and with business organizations is that we have sometimes to be right careful about what we say, because we will tread on the toes of some of our friends who have associated together for the purpose of promoting interests which will help us as a whole. Of course, I am in favor of good roads, as we all are, and when a railroad man-

ager tells you that it is not possible to keep up his road because he cannot get the men to tamp in the cross ties and put in the ballast and repair the road, and that at higher prices the state paralleling the railroad is building a concrete road, with plenty of men, it is rather difficult to take sides. I am not telling you which side I am taking, but I may say this, that the railroads of the United States at this time are carrying the preponderating amount of commerce of the United States, and that unless they are put in better condition than they are it will be necessary to develop these new means of communication at vastly greater pace than they are now being developed."

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

PRESENTING its report at the railway group meeting on April 27, the Committee on Railroads said:

"The business men of the country recognize that as a result of the passage of the new Act responsibility for providing the people with adequate transportation now rests on the Interstate Commerce Commission; and that an equally great responsibility rests on the business men themselves to aid the Commission in every way possible. For the first time the Commission is now in a position to develop for the United States a great national system of transportation privately owned and operated under a comprehensive system of regulation....

"Local chambers of commerce and national trade organizations can help their members to realize that the transportation question is a great national question that should not be regarded from a local viewpoint; that the railroads are en-

titled to receive from shippers and passengers rates that will pay them a living wage for services performed; and that it is the duty of the public to insist that its representatives in city councils, in state legislatures and in the National Congress shall establish by legal enactment a national transportation policy that is sound from a business standpoint.

Further Work for National Chamber

"And the Chamber of Commerce of the United States can aid in this work by collecting from every available source recent and reliable information on transportation questions that are of national importance, and placing this information at the service of the members of the Chamber; and can also assist by formulating sound business policies for the development and regulation of the various transportation agencies, submitting these policies to a referendum vote of the business men of the country, and when this vote is completed, reporting the result to the members of Congress and urging that the principles approved by the Chamber shall be enacted into law. . . .

"Meantime, until the plans for the new Department are put into effect, the Railroad Committee will continue to make a careful study of the work done by the Interstate Commerce Commission and by the railroads themselves to put the provisions of the Transportation Act into effect; and from time to time will report to the members of the Chamber the results of its study."

CONSOLIDATION AND CAR CONTROL

ADDRESSES were delivered at the railway group meeting by John E. Oldham of Boston on con-

solidations and by Charles E. Lee on "Freight Car Control." The text of these addresses may be had upon application to the Chamber, Mills Bldg., Washington, D. C.

RESOLUTION

ADOPTING resolutions drawn by a Committee of which the Chairman was Frederick J. Koster of San Francisco, the Chamber on April 29 approved the following:

Railroads

"The services required by Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce clearly exceed the capacity of the equipment and facilities of our railroads. Rehabilitation of railroads is of predominant importance in the period of readjustment. Toward this rehabilitation the legislative step has now been taken by Congress.

"Realization of the advantages to be obtained from legislation now primarily depend upon administrative authorities of the government and the attitude of the public which is to be served. Each member of the community is urged to consider the value to him of adequate and efficient railroad transportation. The Interstate Commerce Commission and all other public authority participating in administrative responsibility are urged to proceed expeditiously with their function in order that the remedial results of the new legislation may quickly become apparent, railroad credit restored in the manner necessary for the general welfare, and improvement of the railroad and additions of their equipment at once placed in course.

"Until the supply of railroad transportation approximates the demand, every possible economy in use should be practiced, through fuller loading of cars and promptness in loading and unloading."

REQUESTS FOR COPIES

of this leaflet will be welcome from all those desiring to place it in the hands of their representatives or friends. Copies furnished or sent direct to lists upon application to Frank W. Noxon, Secretary Railway Business Association, 30 Church Street, New York.